

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 137

By Yarbro

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Riley C. Darnell of
Clarksville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of our friend and former colleague, Riley C. Darnell, a member of the 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, and 97th Tennessee General Assemblies and Tennessee Secretary of State from 1993 to 2009; and

WHEREAS, Riley Darnell was an exemplary and conscientious public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, born in Clarksville on May 13, 1940, Mr. Darnell was a 1958 graduate of Clarksville High School and a 1962 graduate of Austin Peay State University, where he received his Bachelor of Science degree in Economics and History. He then received his Juris Doctorate from Vanderbilt Law School and was admitted to the bar in 1965; and

WHEREAS, Riley Darnell was commissioned in the United States Air Force as a captain in 1966 and assigned to the Judge Advocate General Corps until his honorable discharge in 1969; upon his return home, he practiced law as a general trial practice attorney in the law firm of Welker and Darnell until 1993; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, Mr. Darnell was elected to serve the people of the 67th District as a member of the Tennessee House of Representatives; during his ten-year tenure, he worked tirelessly to help the citizens of his district and served as chair of the Joint Committee on Fiscal Review and as a member of the House Finance, Ways and Means Committee and the House Judiciary Committee; and

WHEREAS, Riley Darnell was then elected to serve the people of the 22nd District as a member of the Tennessee State Senate, representing the citizens of Montgomery, Stewart, Houston, Cheatham, Robertson, Dickson, and Humphreys counties; over the course of his

twelve-year tenure in the Senate, he served as Senate Democratic Majority Leader, chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, secretary to the Select Joint Committee on Children and Youth, and speaker's designee to the Senate Fiscal Review Committee; and

WHEREAS, Senator Darnell also rendered sterling service as a member of the Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committee, the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Senate Ethics Committee, the Senate Calendar Committee, and the Council on Pensions and Retirement, and he was a member of the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Southern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments; and

WHEREAS, as a member of the General Assembly, he was well-regarded by his colleagues for his sharp intellect, fiscal responsibility, and willingness to work in a bipartisan manner to bring progress to all Tennesseans; he worked to establish a committee on children and youth and sponsored legislation to improve the State's schools, health care, government transparency, and transportation infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Riley Darnell was elected by the General Assembly to serve as Tennessee Secretary of State in 1993 and served in that capacity until 2009; he was responsible for the maintenance of all official acts and proceedings of the governor and the General Assembly and had authority over the Tennessee State Library and Archives as well as divisions responsible for the State's electoral process, the regulation of charitable organizations to prevent theft and fraud, the incorporation of new businesses, administrative law judges, and the publication of the *Tennessee Blue Book* and State regulations; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Darnell also managed 380 employees and served on numerous State boards and commissions responsible for public higher education, promoting access to home ownership, and maintaining the State's sound financial position; and

WHEREAS, a beloved family patriarch, Riley Darnell is sadly mourned but fondly remembered by those who knew and loved him, chief among them his wife of fifty-seven years, Penny; his children, Whit, Eddy, Eve, Joy, and Dawson; his nine grandchildren; his brother, Alex; and a host of extended family and dear friends; and

WHEREAS, greatly respected and admired by his many friends and colleagues, Mr. Darnell loved Tennessee and took great pride in making his community and State a better place for all; his unmatched record of public service stands as a monument to a life well lived; and

WHEREAS, Riley Darnell leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of our former colleague, Riley C. Darnell, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character as a legislator, public servant, and human being, and commend his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Darnell.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.